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SUBJECT: Preliminary Thoughts on the Soviet Build-up in Cuba

We must allow four major possibilities re Soviet motivation in establishing an offensive missile capability in Cuba:

1. The Soviets have had in mind gaining a physical military advantage over the US that would put them in a good, or at least better, position to press the US to reach settlement of various problems — of which Berlin would be the most important but hardly the last — on Soviet terms. In connection with this possibility:

— The Soviet line since 1957 has been that the US must accept as a fact of life a shift in the world power balance in favor of the USSR. As long as the missile gap, etc., was accepted by the US, Moscow was apparently satisfied that it could increasingly capitalize on this line in crisis confrontations with the US. But the trend in the US from the summer of 1961 in the way of both an accelerated build-up of our own military capability and a downgrading of Soviet strength in comparison with our own has knocked the ground from under Soviet calculations. The Soviets have consequently needed quickly to redress the balance and at the same time to convince the US that it had been redressed, or more than redressed. Otherwise Moscow could have only decreasing hope of holding up in a continuing struggle against the US. (The US and not they would be operating from a growing position of strength.)

— There has been evidence of a forced draft Soviet military effort at least since last fall: renewal of testing; a succession of decisions indicating an increased resource allocations to the military despite admitted heavy costs to other pressing programs (i.e., no increase in investments in agriculture; food price rises; curtailment of housing construction; etc.); a spectacular revival of intense activity in space over the past several months; the second round of testing; and the newly announced series of rocket tests in the Pacific.

— Build up of a Soviet medium and intermediate ballistic capability in Cuba, and medium range bombers, would fit into such a forced draft Soviet effort. Either one of two considerations may have been governing; (a) Moscow may have estimated that too long would be

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...it to mount enough ICBM strength to intimidate the US (the USSR does not factor the US) and hence it faced urgent need to work out some means of putting the US under the same sort of direct threat of intermediate range missiles that now hangs over Western Europe, and as early and cheaply as possible (NB what has reportedly gone into Cuba consists of items that the USSR has in great quantity,) or (b) the Cuban capability may be intended as only one step in a series that Moscow calculates will convince the US that an impossible gap exists between US and Soviet capability. If this last should be correct we should look for what Moscow might expect to be a surprise in connection with further nuclear tests, or, especially, in connection with the forthcoming Pacific missile shots. We should also be alert to an early space spectacular.

— It is important to recall that beginning in the spring a lull set in in Moscow's prosecution of its foreign policy objectives. While this may have been due to indecision, the possibility was noted at the time that Moscow might be marking time pending some sort of important gain in the military sphere.

— It is also important to note that because of lead factors decision to establish a missile capability had to be reached at least four months and probably six or more months ago, i.e., at the time when the Soviets were in the midst of pressing their general military build-up and when the marked lull prevailed in the prosecution of their objectives.

2. The second possibility is that the Soviets have had in mind achieving a military position that would enable them to engage with maximum chance of success in a final military showdown with the US. The Cuban build-up would fit into this scheme in the same way it would fit into a scheme that had the more limited objective of securing a stronger military base from which to operate. i.e., it would if gotten away with give the Soviets at relatively small direct cost an important added capability against the US. No concrete or inferential evidence exists that this is actually the Soviet intention. It must be accepted as an important speculative possibility, however, since we cannot now, any more than in the past, rule out completely a Soviet resort to force in its contest with us, given either an estimate of a decisive military advantage over us or an estimate that the contest was going hopelessly against them.

3. A third possibility is that the Soviets have in mind beating up the cold war and has chosen Cuba as a point of departure. The US would be expected to react to Cuba in such a way as to give the Soviets an

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opening to make a serious move or demand in regard to Berlin, or even Turkey, Iran, or some other area where the US has a foreign base; or the US might be expected to so concentrate its attention on Cuba that it would prove unable to react effectively to some other crisis. This possibility, like the foregoing, would require a Soviet readiness to take risks to the point of extreme brinkmanship. We have no evidence that the Soviets are prepared to take such risks; but we again cannot rule out the possibility for the simple reason that it presents a danger that we cannot afford to ignore.

4. A fourth possibility is that the Soviets have in mind simply another move in the chess game of the cold war. In connection with this possibility:

-- Cuba fell into the Soviet lap without particular efforts or costs on Moscow's part. Events moved in a way, however, which came heavily to engage both Soviet resources and prestige. At the same time, the Castro regime showed itself pliable to the Soviet will and the US demonstrated a clear unwillingness to get itself directly involved in a move to get rid of the regime. The USSR and the Satellites were able to move into Cuba in a way and to an extent that might well have suggested almost no limit to possibilities. Thus the Bloc largely took over the economy, the administrative structure, and the military establishment. With the Cubans having welcomed, and the US having tolerated, Soviet military advisers and probably some operational personnel, Soviet tanks, and up-to-date Soviet combat aircraft, Moscow may have reasoned that it could take the next logical step and safely make Cuba into a base that would give it a concrete presence at a strategic point in the western hemisphere. It could draw advantage from this in its dealings with the US, exploiting its nuisance value if nothing else. Specifically, the Soviets might expect to capitalize on the Cuban base either through trading it off in a "deal" with the US re Berlin or some of our other bases, or to secure a commitment on our part to oppose a nuclear capability for the West Germans; or they might expect it to have a sobering effect on us in connection with our over-all stance on negotiations.

-- Moscow might, on the other hand, consider the base acquisition as a potentially, but not immediately important move in the contest for Latin America. Given a further spread of revolution in Latin America, it would be an added factor deterring US counter-action. In this connection, it should be recalled that Khrushchev has voiced, with seeming conviction, faith that with Soviet power what it is, US leaders will not dare to use force to prevent or undo any particular communist advance that does not itself involve a direct use of force on the part of one of the

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"socialist countries". The US would like to resort to "counter revolutionary activities" against such advances, but since it knows that this will lead to war it will be afraid in any given instance to do so.

### U. S. Reaction

1. Which of the four objectives the Soviets may have had in mind, it would seem essential from the standpoint of US interests that the Cuban missile capability be eliminated as quickly and decisively as possible. We should be equally concerned not to allow Moscow to leap frog at such slight cost the disadvantage deriving from the lag in their ICBM capability, to give them an added military advantage if they intend either an over-all military confrontation or to heat up the cold war, or to concede them more or less gratuitously something which they did not previously have with which to drive hard bargains with us.

While risks would certainly exist in case of our forcefully liquidating the capability, it seems likely now as it has seemed likely in the past that the Soviets will not get themselves involved in a war over Cuba, or any other particular issue, that they are not ready for general reasons to undertake. Hence if it is to be a matter of war, we can expect to face the issue over some other issue if Cuba does not produce the result.

2. Beyond this, at this stage in the East-West struggle it is vital that the Soviets not be allowed a success of the magnitude that an effective base on Cuba would represent. The Soviet decision to establish the base, involving the risks that it clearly does, suggests more an act of desperation than anything else. If Moscow gets away with it, the result will doubtless be a definite reduction in pressures operating on it, both internally, (e.g. the arms race) and internationally. It would at the same time increase our own defense problems and adversely affect our prestige. It would, in other words, constitute a ridiculously cheap but highly important tour de force on Moscow's part.

Here it should be stressed that the Cuban development is not parallel to what we have done in Turkey, Western Europe or elsewhere, but to what would be represented by our establishing a base in Finland or even Hungary.

As Soviet success in their Cuban venture would give the Soviets a big power and psychological boost, its failure might prove of great

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importance to our efforts to get the Soviet problem firmly under control. If, as can be well argued, this is a watershed period for the USSR — a time of great decision re whether to continue or backtrack in pursuit of cold war objectives, slamming this particular door might prove decisive. This, I think, is what we ought to keep uppermost in mind when we consider courses of action. I would think our stance should surely and finally be that the base is not permissible or negotiable.

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